

PRESS RELEASE
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**Mosquito Breeding Season Starts Early -
Department of Health and Human Services Urges Residents to
Remove Standing Water to Prevent Disease**

The City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued a warning today urging residents to clean up any pools of standing, stagnant water as this provides a breeding ground for mosquitoes that can carry disease and can be a nuisance to Long Beach residents' quality of life.

Mosquito breeding season is generally from May through October, however, due to the heavy rains in March, followed by the warm weather in Long Beach this year, the breeding season has already begun. Since the insects need water to complete their life cycle, they are most active in and around stagnant water.

Mosquitoes can carry diseases such as West Nile Virus (WNV). Although California had only one human case of WNV last year, it is very likely the State will experience a greater challenge from this deadly disease in 2003. WNV was responsible for nearly 300 deaths in the United States in 2002.

Recommendations for keeping mosquitoes under control on resident's personal property are fairly simple:

- Dispose of tin cans, discarded tires, and plastic containers as they hold standing water;
- Drain or fill low spots in the ground and drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers to prevent moisture from collecting;
- Water in pet feeding bowls should be changed often;
- Clogged roof gutters should be cleaned at least once a year;
- Swimming pools that are not being used on a regular basis must be cleaned and chlorinated.

Basically, anything that contains standing water that is not moved, cleaned or chlorinated, should be eliminated. In addition, residents should avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn or dusk, wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors, use insect repellent products with fewer than 35% DEET for adults and 10% for children and ensure all openable windows are screened.

(more)

Although private property is where residents must focus their attention, there are risks of standing water in lots of other public areas of the city. The DHHS program has an active Vector Control Program, which provides mosquito control in other public areas of the city. This program plays an important part in limiting the occurrence of mosquito borne disease through active monitoring of mosquito populations and providing measures to control or eliminate their growth. The DHHS staff provides mosquito surveillance on a weekly basis by monitoring potential breeding sights for mosquito habitation such as flood channels, pump stations, oil fields, ditches, canals, ponds and neighborhood gutters. The program also collects dead birds (crows, hawks, owls, ravens) to determine if they were infected with any viruses. Portions of the city are also served by the Greater Los Angeles Vector Control District and the Compton Creek Vector Control District.

If you have any questions regarding mosquito control measures in the city of Long Beach, please feel free to contact the DHHS Environmental Health Program at (562) 570-4132 or go to the DHHS website at www.longbeach.gov/health. Further information may be obtained at the State of California Department of Health Services web page at www.westnile.ca.gov, or at the Federal Centers for Disease control at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile.